

05/05/78

WYCOMBE WANDERERS 1, SUTTON UNITED 1

THOSE LOYAL supporters who braved seemingly impossible conditions to see Sutton bow out their season on Friday night were rewarded with an entertaining match from which United collected only their second point in eight years on the Loakes Park slope, and thus assured themselves of finishing at least seventh in the Isthmian League Premier Division table.

Torrential rain throughout the day had made the Wycombe pitch a mudbath and reduced the much-awaited clash into something of a lottery — indeed it is unlikely the game would have been allowed to go on at an earlier stage of the season.

Yet for all that there was no shortage of effort from either camp, and both teams deserve praise for managing as much skilful football as they did.

Sutton, in particular, must have been exhausted after their labours on a similarly heavy Leatherhead pitch the previous night, yet they lasted the pace until the final 15 minutes and even then defended resolutely enough to deny their hosts the winner they threatened.

One-time Wycombe skippers John Delaney and Larry Pritchard both showed home fans they have lost little of their old skills, Delaney especially proving a tower of strength in defence and moving forward at every opportunity for dead-ball kicks, coming close to scoring two or three times early in the game.

However, the familiar non-stop ebullience of Gavin Fraser, another ex-Blue, seemed to surprise many Wycombe fans.

ENCOURAGING

Perhaps most encouraging of all, though, was the form of young Micky Joyce on his first introduction to the wiles of the Wycombe slope. He continued in the impressive manner he had shown at Leatherhead the previous night and was rewarded with his second goal in the two games.

In a similar build-up to his debut at Fetcham Grove, Joyce collected a ball on the edge of the area after Pritchard's free kick had been only palmed out

by Maskell, and he showed commendable coolness in picking his spot to finish the job off.

Wycombe had gone ahead 15 minutes earlier when Sutton lost possession from a throw-in deep in their own half and the ball was cleared out to Mick Hollifield, who burst through United's remaining cover and cracked a fine shot well out of Collyer's reach.

Wycombe will no doubt consider themselves unlucky not to have restored their lead before half-time, referee T. Maber blowing for the interval only a fraction of a second before another loose clearance was planted firmly back into the net.

But the real winner at Loakes

Park was the weather, and anything less than a share of the points would have been rough justice on either of these two plucky sides.

Sutton. — Collyer, McKinnon, Waldon, Rains, Delaney, Stephens, Fraser, Pritchard, Kidd, Joyce, Milne. Sub Mills for Stephens.

Put on spot

PALACE beat Wimbledon 9-8 on penalties after drawing 1-1 (Silkman) in the first round of the London five-a-side championship on Wednesday last week. Then drew 2-2 (Swindlehurst, P. Hinchelwood) with Watford but lost 3-2 on penalties.